

Michael F. Easley
Governor



State of North Carolina
Office of the Governor

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Contact: Amanda Wherry
Phone: (919) 733-5612

EASLEY APPOINTS MEMBERS TO HEALTH AND WELLNESS TRUST FUND COMMISSION
Renews commitment to funding a prescription drug plan for seniors

RALEIGH - Gov. Mike Easley today announced six appointments to the Health and Wellness Trust Fund Commission and charged them with implementing a plan to help seniors cope with the high cost of prescription drugs.

The Health and Wellness Trust Fund was established by the General Assembly to take in and allocate 25% of North Carolina's share of the multi-billion dollar national tobacco settlement agreement reached in 1999. As attorney general, Easley was instrumental in brokering the multi-state deal. The current balance in the fund is more than \$60 million.

Easley has proposed that these funds be used to establish a prescription drug plan for North Carolina seniors. He said the North Carolina plan would be most effective as a supplement to a federal proposal, but he urged Washington to act quickly.

"Our seniors were there when we needed them, and North Carolina will be there now that they need us," said Easley. "We want to do this the right way. It is important that our state plan work within the framework of any federal proposal so that we can make the most impact with limited resources. If Washington does not act this year, North Carolina will move forward with a plan to help our seniors get the medicine they deserve."

By law, funds from the Health and Wellness Trust Fund may be used to address the health needs of vulnerable and underserved populations in North Carolina; to fund programs and initiatives that include research, education, prevention and treatment of health problems in North Carolina and to increase the capacity of communities to respond to the public's health needs; and to develop a comprehensive community-based plan with goals and objectives to improve the health and wellness of the people of North Carolina with a priority on preventing, reducing and remedying the health effects of tobacco use and with an emphasis on reducing youth tobacco use.

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